

A LETTER

OR

THE MORAL CAUSES

THAT HAVE PRODUCED

THE EVIL SPIRIT OF THE TIMES;

ADDRESSED TO

THE HONORABLE JAMES HARPER,

MAYOR OF NEW-YORK.

INCLUDING

A VINDICATION OF THE AUTHOR

FROM THE

INFAMOUS CHARGES MADE AGAINST HIM BY JAS. GORDON BENNETT  
WILLIAM L. STONE, AND OTHERS.

BY THE RIGHT REV. DR. HUGHES,

BISHOP OF NEW YORK.

New-York :

J. WINCHESTER, NEW WORLD PRESS, :

XXX ANN STREET.



persons whose names I have mentioned. I have not had an opportunity of consulting a single document. What I have said regarding myself, rests upon my own interior consciousness; what I have said in the way of opinion, must of course rest upon the accuracy of my judgment, and must partake of its imperfections. But I have stated some things as facts, merely on the strength of my memory, and if these should not be in reality as I have stated, then do I willingly retract them—for I have no disposition to do injustice to any man. Of these statements, one is that Colonel Stone in quoting from Bennett, suppressed the name of his author, and instead of it, put in the phrase “A Morning Print.” Another is, the attack by this Mr. Bennet on Mrs. Daniel O’Connell. This I never saw, but have no doubt in my own mind of its existence and of its character. Another still is, the fabrication of the incendiary speech by Bennett, from which a quotation has been given—as having been made by the Native Americans. I do not say that it is a fabrication, but of course, the parties interested can easily determine the fact.

With high respect, sir,

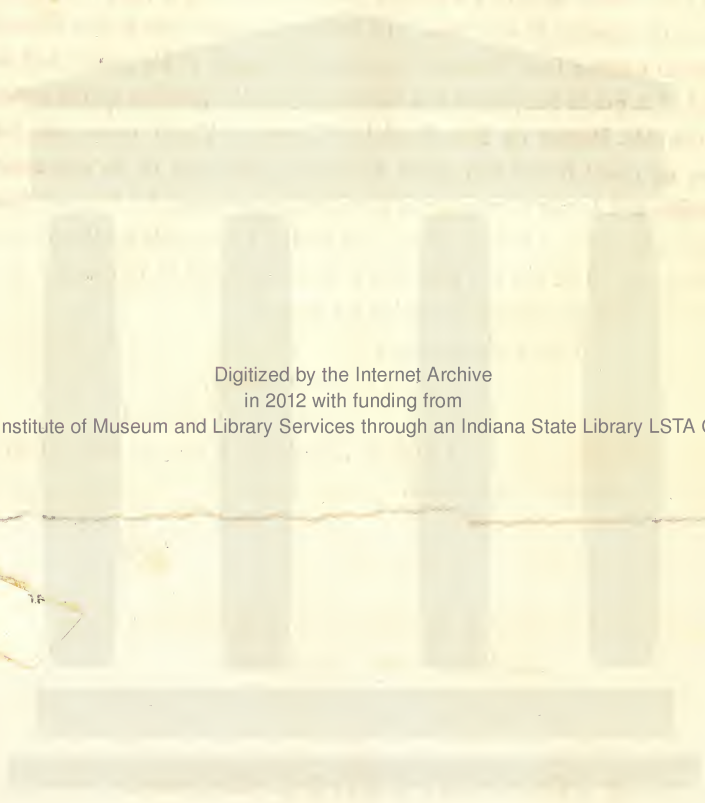
I have the honor to remain,

Your obedient servant,

† JOHN HUGHES, Bishop of New-York.

NEW-YORK, May 17th, 1844.

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TO THE

HONORABLE JAMES HARPER,

MAYOR OF NEW-YORK.

SIR: I am in the receipt of a letter from a young "Native American," signed with his proper name, in which he advises me, that he has provided himself with a "poniard," by which I am "to bite the dust." If he had not put his name to this document I should have destroyed it, as my rule is with all anonymous communications, without even glancing at its contents. I cannot answer such a correspondent; but, placing his letter in your hands, if you wish it, I shall pursue the even tenor of my way, to be found wherever my duties as a Catholic Bishop, and a citizen of the United States, require me to be. I hope that I am at peace with God—know that I am at peace, so far as in me lies, with all men—and thus, I am ready to yield my life into the hands of its adorable Author, when, and as, He may dispose.

But if my correspondent should execute his own prophecy, as he says, I deem it proper to have put on record such matters as are due to my reputation, and to my country, at a moment like the present. I shall be somewhat tedious, but I bespeak your patience—for I wish to say all, and it may not be so convenient at another time. I shall use no term of reproach or bitterness, in reference to matters of recent occurrence, on which too many here have already been uttered. No man deplores more deeply the melancholy results of intemperate discussion, whether on one side or on the other, in a sister capital, than I do; and for months past, it has been my study to avert similar scenes in this city. From the moment when a new party was commenced, based on the principle of hostility to a particular religion and to foreigners, even the naturalized, I

anticipated the results with the deepest apprehension, for the peace of the community and the honor of the country. Not that I dispute the right of men, in the abstract, to form themselves into combinations on any principle, which their duty to their country sanctions; but topics of this description were, as I conceived, too exciting in their nature. From a very early period, I prevented the only papers which affect to represent Catholic interests, from opposing either the principles or the progress, of the party. When the private interests, or enterprise, of individuals, urged them to establish newspapers, intended expressly to oppose the progress of "Native Americanism," and to uphold the constitutional rights of foreigners, of all religions, I peremptorily refused to give either patronage or approbation—foreseeing, as I imagined, to what point such antagonism must lead. I even caused certain articles to be published, which should fall under the eyes of a large portion of my own flock, and which might caution them against the temptation of retaliating insult, in arraying themselves in opposition to the principles of this new party. I caused them to be thus reminded that, if those principles were wrong, time and the good sense of the community, would be the best remedy; while Catholics, and above all Irish Catholics, were entirely unfitted to apply a corrective. I had the consolation to witness the good effects of this advice—so that boys and young men could march, even in the night, through streets almost entirely occupied by Irish Catholics, with fife and drum before them, and with illumined banners bearing such inscriptions as that of "NO POPERY"—as a public and political device. It is not for me to say whether the Native American party had, or had not, a right to adopt such devices, and display them through such a population. But even supposing they had the right, was there not something due to the weakness of poor human nature?—to the religious rights and feelings of men, under our Constitution?—to the peculiar susceptibility of the Irish, and especially in reference to this identical subject, which reminded them of the hereditary degradation, from which they thought to have escaped when they touched these shores?

I am grateful to Almighty God, that notwithstanding these injudicious exhibitions, no accident or disturbance has occurred, during the progress of the movements which have placed you in your present honorable station. And I would to God! that under all provocation, a similar forbearance had been practiced in Philadelphia. Yet, notwithstanding

all my solicitude and efforts—so feverish and morbid—so bewildered and diseased, had the public mind become, in certain quarters, on the subject of *POPERY*, that a lie of not more than five lines, circulated through any of our papers, which might desire to create riots, would have been sufficient to have produced the most fearful results.

My name and character were assailed in every public meeting of your special constituents. I was abused as a politician ;—as a meddler with the laws ;—as an intriguer with parties ; and a man not only capable, but actually designing to invade the liberties of the country. The fearful crisis, which I claim the merit of having prevented, in this city, but which has left its melancholy stigma in another city, equally dear to me, has rendered these calumnies against my character so important, that I now meet my accusers in the triumphant manner which you will see, before the close of this communication. But before I enter further upon my subject, I must tell you a few words respecting myself, which, being of so little importance to the public at large, I shall make as brief as possible. It is twenty-seven years since I came to this country. I became a citizen, therefore, as soon as my majority of age and other circumstances, permitted. My early ancestors were from Wales ; and very possibly shared with Strongbow and his companions, in the plunder which rewarded the first successful invaders of lovely, but unfortunate Ireland. Of course, from the time of their conversion from Paganism, they were Catholics. You, sir, who must be acquainted with the melancholy annals of religious intolerance in Ireland, may remember that, when a traitor to his country, and for what I know, to his creed, also, wished to make his peace to the Irish government of Queen Elizabeth, McMahan, Prince of Monnaghan, the traitor's work, which he volunteered to accomplish, was "*to root out the whole Sept of the Hughes.*" He did not, however, succeed in destroying them, although he "*rooted them out ;*" proving, as a moral for future times, that persecution cannot always accomplish what it proposes. In the year 1817, a descendant of the Sept of the Hughes, came to the United States of America. He was the son of a farmer of moderate but comfortable means. He landed on these shores, friendless, and with but a few guineas in his purse. He never received of the charity of any man ; he never borrowed of any man without repaying ; he never had more than a few dollars at a time ; he never had a patron, in the Church or out of it ; and it is he, who has the honor to address you now, as Catholic Bishop of New-York.

I am aware that a certain lady, who writes for one of the Boston papers, has given both her own name and mine, in connection with the statement, that I "entered the service of Bishop Dubois, as a gardener, and that he, having discovered in me the stuff which Bishops and Cardinals are made of, with intellect enough to have governed the Church in its most prosperous times, educated me on the strength of this discovery." I would just remark with all respect for this amiable, but, as I must say, silly lady, that she is mistaken, and exhibits only the "*stuff* the *Boston papers* are made of." My connection with Bishop Dubois was in virtue of a regular contract between us, in which neither was required to acknowledge any obligation to the other. I, however, felt the kindness of that very able and saintly Prelate, and the friendship which included me with so many other young men to whom it was extended. I entered the college the first day, an utter stranger to Bishop Dubois until then. I was to superintend the garden, as a compensation for my expenses in the house, until a vacancy should occur, by which I might be appointed a teacher for such classes as I should be fit to take charge of. I continued in this way, during the first nine months of my stay at the college, prosecuting my studies under a private preceptor. The rest of my time, between seven and eight years, I continued to prosecute my own studies, and at the same time, to teach the classes that were assigned to me. At the end of that period, I was ordained Priest, and stationed in Philadelphia. Here my public life commenced. After eleven years from this time, I was sent, not by my own choice, to be the Assistant Bishop of New-York. I had formed, during these years, friendships, ever to be cherished, in many of the most respectable families, Protestant as well as Catholic, in Philadelphia. I refer to them, without distinction of creed, for what was my character, as a clergyman and as a citizen. If, sir, you will weigh all these circumstances, you will perceive immediately, that were I a person of the character assigned to me, in the late denunciations of those who assail me, it is hardly probable that I should be now occupying, by the judgment of others, the situation in which I am placed. I am a citizen. I understand the rights of a citizen, and the duties also. I understand the genius, and constitution, and history of the country. My feelings, and habits, and thoughts, have been so much indented with all that is American; that I had almost forgotten I was a foreigner, un-



til recent circumstances have brought it too painfully to my recollection. This, and other matters yet to be treated of, must be my apology for bringing into public notice, anything so uninteresting as my personal or private affairs. The retrospect, however, has brought back to my mind the recollections of youth. I perceived then, that the intolerance of my own country had left me no inheritance, except that of a name which, though humble, was untarnished. In the future, the same intolerance was a barrier to every hope, in my native land; and there was but one other country, in which I was led to believe the rights and privileges of citizen rendered all men equal. I can even now remember my reflections, on first beholding the American flag. It never crossed my mind that a time might come, when that flag, the emblem of the freedom just alluded to, should be divided, by apportioning its *stars* to the citizens of native birth, and its *stripes* only, as the portion of the foreigner. I was of course but young and inexperienced; and yet, even recent events have not diminished my confidence in that ensign of civil and religious liberty. It is possible that I was mistaken: but still I clung to the delusion, if it be one, and as I trusted to that flag, on a *Nation's faith*—I think it more likely that its stripes will disappear, altogether; and that before it shall be employed as an instrument of bad faith, toward the foreigners of every land—the white portions will *blush* into crimson; and then, the glorious stars alone will remain.

Since my arrival in New-York, my public and private life has been devoted sedulously to the duties of my station. One of the first things that struck me, as a deplorable circumstance in the condition of my flock, was the ignorance and vice to which the children of Catholic and emigrant parents, were exposed. I had the simplicity to believe, that in endeavoring to elevate them to virtue and usefulness, through the means of education, I should be at once rendering a service to them, and discharging a duty to my country, the latter of which, especially, would be appreciated, by good men of all creeds. I intended to take such measures as might be necessary for this purpose on my return from Europe, in the year 1840, without however having exchanged, as far as I recollect, opinions with any one on that subject. But I found, on my return, that it had been sufficient to attract the attention of the public authorities, and had become a public topic in the annual message of the Governor of this State. I found also, that like other topics of that date, it was instant-

ly turned into a political question, even by the people who had not—though most interested—the discernment to understand the patriotism and humanity by which it had been dictated. Meetings had been held on the subject; intemperate language had been used; disorder, almost amounting to violence, had characterized those meetings; and for these reasons I resolved to attend them in person—expressly for the purpose of keeping out an unfortunate class of political underlings, who had been accustomed to traffic in their simplicity. In these meetings held from time to time the question was discussed—the imperfect education afforded by our own charity schools—the vast numbers that could not be received at them, and would not be sent to the schools of the Public School Society—on account of the strong anti-Catholic tendencies which they manifested, through the medium of objectionable books, prejudiced teachers, and sectarian influences. This was followed by a respectful petition to the Common Council of the city. Before that Council I was permitted to state the grievance complained of. A discussion took place, growing out of remonstrances against the petition, and it was finally rejected by almost a unanimous vote. This, the portion of the people who considered themselves aggrieved in the matter, had anticipated. But this was necessary—before submitting the case to the Legislature of the State. In due time however, petitions were forwarded, signed by a large number of citizens, Catholics and Protestants, natives as well as foreigners. The prayer of this petition was received favorably, because it seemed to be but reasonable and just. A bill to remedy the evil was drawn up, I think, by the superintendent of schools, and if I am not mistaken, passed the House of Representatives. It was at the close of the session, and lost in the other House. Of the fitness of its provisions to remedy the evil I am altogether unable to speak. But it was believed by all, that the Legislature, as soon as it could understand the nature of the grievance, and the necessity for a remedy, would not fail to remove the one, and provide for the other. Accordingly the question, notwithstanding the many folds of misrepresentation and prejudice in which its numerous opponents endeavored to involve it, was making much progress in the public mind. Meetings continued to be held from time to time—with open doors and free admission—Protestants, as well as Catholics, attended, and sometimes took part. I attended them all, expressly for the purpose of seeing that politics should not be introduced. Matters thus progressed—the advocates of the mea-

sure being divided, according to their predilections between one party and another. But the opponents of the measure in the meantime—numerous and zealous as they were, had not been idle, but had presented the question to the public in every false light that ingenuity could devise, as may be seen by reference to whole pages of calumnies, at that time, about a “Union of Church and State,” etc., which have been refuted and forgotten.

Just previous to the election—when, as it appears, parties had made their nominations for the Legislature, the opponents of education (except with infringement of conscience) called upon the voters of both parties, to send no one to Albany, unless such as should give a pledge before election, to refuse the prayer of the petitioners. For this fact, I refer to editorials of that date of the Commercial Advertiser, and the Journal of Commerce, among other papers of the city. This plan was acted upon instantly, and to an extent which left the petitioners no alternative but to vote for men, pledged in their face, to refuse what they regarded as simple justice. Hence, in spite of all my efforts to prevent it, the question forced itself, in a political form, on the attention of the people, who claimed one thing—namely, education without another thing—namely, the violation of their conscience; but which, the Commercial Advertiser and its allies would not allow to be separated. The very last meeting of the friends of education, previous to the election, was the moment when this unworthy stratagem came under public attention. A number of individuals, who were versed in these matters, had, however, taken the precaution to ascertain, that certain candidates had refused to sign the pledge; and were ready to go to Albany free, to vote for the prayer of the petitioners or against it, as their own sense of justice toward their constituents might dictate. Others had already given their promise against it. These persons then suggested that names, without any hope of election but simply to exercise the right of voting on, should be substituted to make up the deficiency. I claimed it as my right—I regarded it as my duty, on that occasion, to urge those who were friendly to a large portion of the neglected children of New-York, to vote for no man who had prejudged their cause, in the hope of being elected; and who had bound himself to refuse them the protection of the laws, whatever might be the justice of their case. My argument was this—urged with all the limited powers of reasoning that I possessed; that they deserved the injustice and deg-

radation of which they complained, if they voted for judges publicly pledged before-hand to pass sentence against them. Of course, in a speech of some twenty minutes, I must have developed this argument, and presented it in every variety of form, capable of making it understood, and pointing out the more liberal attitude of those who, as not being pledged in favor of either side, were left free, to do impartial justice in the premises. If this was a political speech, then have I made one political speech, in my life. There were high-minded, well-educated, and honorable Protestant gentlemen present, and to whom I appeal with confidence that—twisted or turned, by perverse ingenuity as it might be, my speech amounted to the principle, just laid down—to the development of it, and nothing more. But there was a reporter of Bennett's there, who made such a speech as he thought proper—which was afterward, as I have reason to believe, fitted up for the purpose of producing one of Bennett's "tremendous excitements," and making "the Herald always the most enterprising paper of New-York." Having taken this report—having studded it with the gems of its own ribaldry, and made some half a column of editorial comments, in that mock gravity of which Bennett is capable, the Herald of the next morning became the *basis* and *fountain*, of all the vituperation, calumny, and slander, which have been heaped on "Bishop Hughes," throughout the United States, from that day until this. From the Herald, the report was copied into the Commercial Advertiser of that afternoon—the editor, Col. Stone, taking special care to substitute the word a "morning print," instead of Bennett's Herald, lest his own views of the question might be injuriously affected by the character of his authority, if that authority were known. Then followed the commentaries and columns of abuse which filled the other papers, and ran throughout the country, each editor adding (particularly, while the delusion lasted,) his own editorial for the benefit of his readers. I must, however, do several of the city papers the justice to say, that either more honest or better informed, than their colleagues of the press, they understood the question, and declined to take any part in the hue and cry that was so malignantly raised about it. It is equally due to truth to say also, that several others, after they discovered their mistake, retreated from the position which they had first assumed.

But the occasion was too good for the purposes of certain parties, not to be improved for their ulterior designs. Accordingly, as the occupants of

many of the pulpits of the city, had entertained their congregations with political sermons on the school question, for months before—so also for months after, whatever might be the text from the Bible, the abuse of the Catholic religion, under the nickname of popery, together with all the slang, and all the calumnies furnished by the *New-York Herald*, the *Commercial Advertiser*, the *Journal of Commerce*, and other papers of that stamp, was sure to make up the body of the sermon. By this process the minds of the people were excited, their passions inflamed, their credulity imposed upon, and their confidence perverted. Then came the new party. It is impossible that the training of the pulpits should not have predisposed a large number of persons to join in the movement, which they had been taught to believe as a duty of their religion. Who can read without horror the denunciations, the slanders, the infuriated appeals, which have been spoken and written; in which Heaven and earth have been mingled together in a confusion of rhetoric and passion, to promote the objects of this new combination. It has succeeded in our city, and I for one, am not sorry at it. But at the same time, if that portion of the citizens who have been so atrociously abused, had not had the good sense, the patriotism, the love of order, which enabled them to restrain themselves, even under the greatest insults that can be offered to the feelings of men, it is impossible to tell what might have been the consequence. Closing, then, this sketch of the question in so much as it relates to others, I shall now call your attention to something which is personal to myself.

Sir, I pretend, and I think I shall be able to prove to you, that these slanders, originating in *Bennett's Herald*, the *Commercial Advertiser*, the *Journal of Commerce*, the *New-York Sun*, and for a moment, (but for a moment only,) the *Evening Post*—that these slanders—repeated, embellished, enlarged, and evangelized from many of the pulpits of the city—that these slanders, re-echoed in the public lectures of the *Rev. Mr. Chcever* and other clergymen of his spirit—that these slanders—forming the staple of political excitement, in the association which placed you in the honorable chair you occupy, and which I am happy to say, as far as I know, you are worthy to fill:—I think I shall be able to prove that all these slanders, I say, were, and are, and will be to eternity—slanders, and nothing more. You, of course, will be astonished at reading this declaration. You will think it impossible that so many respectable editors, so

many eloquent orators, and, above all, so many grave and Rev. Divines, should have united in deceiving the people of New-York—from the press, from the rostrum, from the pulpit; by denouncing Bishop Hughes as an enemy of the Bible—as an intriguer with political parties—as a blackener of the public school-books—if Bishop Hughes had not given them cause to build such accusations in the foundations of truth—and yet, sir, there is no truth either in the foundation or the superstructure. I now call upon these editors, orators, and clergymen, to stand forth and furnish the facts, proving the truth of one single charge against me. I am aware that tracing up these falsehoods to their foundation, the public, who have been so long deceived, will refer to the testimony and the denunciations of certain clergymen, who are zealous for the Bible, but unfortunately little acquainted with the charitable and mild spirit which the Bible inculcates. If I ask *them*, why they misled, possibly without intending it, their flocks to such an extent—they will refer me to the public newspapers. If I call on the editors of these public newspapers, it will be found that they copied, one from another, until you reach the second link, who is Colonel Stone of the Commercial Advertiser; and he will tell me that he took it from a “morning print,” that print being no other than Bennett’s Herald. Of course, this does not touch the original article in the Commercial Advertiser, less scurrilous, but more injurious than those of Bennett himself in as much as Colonel Stone is looked upon as a highly respectable man. Of the Journal of Commerce I shall say nothing, as its editor appears to be laboring under a weakness or duplicity of moral vision, for the effects, and defects, of which he is, perhaps, scarcely accountable. But I have traced these calumnies now to their primary witnesses—James Gordon Bennett and Wm. L. Stone.

It may be asked—in the supposition here made—why I submitted in silence to these slanders for so long a time. My answers are, in the first place, that my duties left me but little time to attend to them. Secondly, that if I refuted one calumny to-day, I should have to refute another to-morrow. Thirdly, that one class of my editorial assailants was what men usually call too contemptible, and another class too bigotted, to make it worth while. But I confess that the principal reason, in my mind, was the very honorable philosophy of an observation which I heard many years ago of the late estimable Bishop White, in Philadelphia. His remark was to this effect: that such is the character of the American peo-

ple, that no man, who takes care to be always in the right, can ever ultimately be put down by calumny—whatever may be its temporary effects. This was his answer, and his plea for the licentiousness of the press in its attacks upon individuals. And hence he inferred, that owing to the love of justice and fair play, which he conceived to be a strong element of the American character, every honest man can easily afford to “live down” a calumny. This remark struck me very much, at the time; and wherever the question became merely personal to myself, I have invariably acted on the principle—while my own experience, of now nearly twenty years, of public life, has only confirmed its soundness and its truth. These are my reasons for having allowed the calumnies against Bishop Hughes to remain so long uncontradicted;—while I never let an opportunity pass of meeting, and exposing and refuting, the misrepresentations which were directed against the civil and religious rights of that portion of our citizens to whom I wished to see extended the blessings of education.

It has been a matter of speculation among many in this city, to solve the motive for the constant, the varying, malignity of Mr. Bennett against Bishop Hughes. Some have supposed that he was kept in bribe for the purpose; others have ascribed it to revenge:—which, though strong, is said to be in slavish subjection to avarice—in that man’s breast. But of all whose opinion has reached me upon the subject, there is not one who believes it to be gratuitous. I express no opinion on the subject myself. I shall enter into no abuse of this unfortunate man; but as those who are inclined to believe that he is actuated by revenge, have told me that he ascribes the reception he met with from Daniel O’Connell to my agency, and as I do not deem it necessary that even he should be under a mistake, on that subject; I will assign what I look upon as the key of explanation, to the somewhat rude treatment which he received in a land celebrated for its hospitality, and where every decent man—from America especially, is received with a full heart of Irish welcome. It will make a little episode in this communication; but I have no doubt that this fact at least, will be interesting to the public not only in America, but also in Great Britain, and all Europe. Four years ago I was introduced to Daniel O’Connell, in London. This was at my own request, for I wished, having then the opportunity, to see a man of whom there was more of good and of evil—said, than of any other in the world. A few minutes

after I sat down, and while the conversation was on mere commonplace topics, a silence ensued on his part, sufficiently long to make me think that I ought to retire. I observed his eyes swimming in tears. This astonished me still more, and I was about to withdraw, when he addressed me, as nearly as I can remember, in the following words—but in a voice which, though almost stifled with grief, yet sounded as the softest and tenderest that ever struck upon my ears: “Dr. Hughes, I have been forty years a public man—I have been engaged in political strife with men of every party and of every creed—I am, by all odds, the best abused man in the world; but through all this time neither Tories, nor Whigs, nor even Orangemen themselves, ever made an attack on the mother of my children. She was mild and gentle; she was meek and charitable. She was loved and respected by friend and foe. *My* bitterest enemies would have spared me, if they could not reach me without hurting the lamb of my bosom. The only attack that ever was made on Mrs. O’Connell, come from your side of the water, and from your city, in a paper called the New-York Morning Herald. Some mistaken friend, I suppose, thought to do me a service by sending me the paper. It reached me just after Mrs. O’Connell’s death. Of course, the poisoned arrow missed the gentle heart for which it was intended, but it reached and rested in mine.” Mr. Bennett was not married, when he wrote this attack on the amiable wife and mother; but those who are husbands and fathers can best judge, whether Mr. O’Connell’s reception of him, at the Corn Exchange, was merited or not.—Whether O’Connell’s is the only heart that has been wounded, by the “poisoned arrow” aimed at the domestic peace of mankind, from the same quarter, it is unnecessary for me to say. But, at all events, I think this will satisfy Bennett, that I had nothing to do with the kind reception he met with in Dublin. What the motive, then, of his hostility toward me is, I am still at a loss to comprehend; but in truth it has given me very little uneasiness. In the hypothesis that he has been bribed to abuse me, I presume that a counter-bribe would at once double his profits—diminish his labor—and secure his silence;—but I cannot afford it, and even if I could, it should not be given. Now, however, I am going to meet Mr. James Gordon Bennett, not in abuse, but as my accuser: and with Mr. Bennett as my first accuser, I associate Col. Wm. Stone as my second. Let these, by name, represent the whole class of editors, orators, and reverend divines who have assailed me, and now I am prepared to meet them all.



Either Bishop Hughes has entered into a collusion as a politician, with political agents—or he has not.

Either he has driven or attempted to drive the Bible from the common schools of New York—or he has not.

Either he has organized a political party in New-York—or he has not.

Either he has blackened, or required to be blackened, the public school-books of New-York—or he has not.

Finally, either he has done actions and expressed sentiments, unworthy of a Christian Bishop, and an American citizen—or he has not.

These are propositions which the plainest capacity is competent to understand. And now, taking Bishop White's estimate of the American character, I am about to constitute the American people, Whigs, Democrats, Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Gentiles, citizens both of native and foreign birth, as judges between James Gordon Bennett, and Colonel William L. Stone, on the one side, and Bishop Hughes on the other. I shall not anticipate the judgment of the public. I shall merely say that I believe it will be just, and justice is all that I require. Happily the dispute is one, in which sophistry and misrepresentation cannot find place. It is a question of *facts*, and against facts, reasoning is useless. Every fact, to be susceptible of proof, requires witnesses who can bear testimony to its truth. Wherever there are witnesses in a case, the thing testified to, can be established as having occurred at some given time and place. In a court of justice, if a man swore that he witnessed the occurrence of a fact, and yet could not tell either the time, or the place, of the occurrence, he would be set aside either as perjuring himself, or as being deranged. Let my case, then, be judged by these established rules of common and public justice. I will state my own conduct, as far as it has any bearing on the case, in a series of propositions, and in the form of FACTS.

1st Proposition. I have never, in my life, done any action, or uttered a sentiment, tending to abridge any human being, of all or any of the rights of conscience, which I claim to enjoy myself, under the American Constitution.

2nd. I have never asked or wished, that any denomination should be deprived of the Bible, or such version of the Bible, as that denomination conscientiously approved—in our Common or Public Schools.

3rd. I have never entered into intrigue, or collusion with any political

party, or individual—and no political party, or individual, ever approached me with so insulting a proposition.

4th. I have never requested or authorized the “blackening of the public school-books” in the city of New-York.

5th. In all my public life in New-York, I have done no action—uttered no sentiment, unworthy of a Christian Bishop and an American citizen.

These are all *negative* propositions; and I am not bound to prove a negative; but I assert these propositions as *facts*, and if they are not true, James Gordon Bennett, William L. Stone, and the other assailants of my character, must be in possession of the positive facts which prove them false. Let them state the time, and place, where the facts which prove them false occurred; and the witnesses of those facts—and then, I join issue, and pledge myself to refute their witnesses. I shall now continue my propositions, not in the *negative*, but in the *affirmative* form.

6th Proposition. I have always contended for the right of conscience, for all men, as universally as they are recognized in the American Constitution.

7th. I have always preached that every denomination, Jews, Christians, Catholics, Protestants, of every sect and shade, were all entitled to the entire enjoyment of the freedom of conscience, without let or hindrance, from any other denomination, or set of denominations—no matter how small their number, or how unpopular the doctrines they professed.

8th. I have always preached, both publicly and privately, the Christian obligation of *peace and good will toward all men*, even when they hate and persecute us.

9th. I have been accustomed to pray publicly, in our churches, for the constituted authorities of the United States; for the welfare of my fellow-citizens of all denominations, and without distinction; while James Gordon Bennett, and William L. Stone, were, from day to day, exciting the hatred of my fellow-citizens against me, and, so far, attempting to deprive me of the protection of my country.

These affirmative propositions, I am bound and prepared to prove, if Mr. Bennett and Col. Stone deny them. All the propositions are *FACTS*, and are to be overthrown, if assailed at all, not by sophistry or argument, but by other facts with witnesses, which will prove them untrue. Now, therefore, James Gordon Bennett, Wm. L. Stone, and ye other deceivers of the public, stand forth and meet Bishop Hughes. But then, come

forth in no quibbling capacity ;—come forth as honest men, as true American citizens, with truth in your hearts, and candor on your lips. I know you can write well—and can multiply words and misrepresent truth ;—this is not the thing that will serve you now. Come forth with your FACTS. Bishop Hughes places himself in the simple panoply of an honest man, before the American people. He asks no favor—but he simply asks, whether the opinion of Bishop White is true, that with the American people no man can be put down by calumny. Bring, therefore, your facts to disprove the foregoing *negative* propositions. Bishop Hughes pledges himself to prove those that are *affirmative*, if you, or any decent man, with his signature will deny them.

You may, indeed, say that what Bishop Hughes found it his duty to do, produced, at the time, *disturbance* among politicians. You may pretend that, therefore, Bishop Hughes is a politician. If you think so, it only proves that you are bad logicians. As well might you say that a man who has a purse, is morally guilty of the crime of robbery which deprives him of it, on the plea that if he had either staid at home, or gone out with empty pockets, the robbery would not have taken place. I never was, I never will be, a politician. I am the pastor of a Christian flock. I am a citizen of a country, whose proudest boast is, that it has made the civil and religious rights of *all* its citizens *equal*. As a pastor, I was bound to see that the religious rights of my flock should not be filched away from them, under pretext of education, and against the Constitution and laws of my country. I attended the meetings in reference to that subject, not as a politician, but to exclude men of that class from turning a simple question, into a base object. When, in the prosecution of that purpose, no alternative was left to the people long deprived of the rights of education, but to vote for candidates, bound by pledges to deny them justice, and even refuse them a hearing ; and this on the very eve of the election ; I urged them with all the powers of my mind and heart, to repel the disgusting indignity of this stratagem. I told them to cut their way through this circle of fire, with which the opponents of the rights of education narrow-mindedly, and ungenerously, surrounded them. I told them that they would be signing and sealing their own degradation, if they voted for men, pledged to refuse them even the chance of justice. But then, no party—no individual of any party—had any thing to do with the prompting of this advice, but myself. It sprang

from my own innate sense of duty—my own conception of the rights of constituency in a free government.

Even if it had been political, I should have done nothing more than is done by clergymen of other denominations, without exciting the least censure or surprise. Let a stranger drop in, accidentally, to some of our religious conventions, composed almost entirely of clergymen, and—listening for an hour to the debates—he will be tempted to imagine them a committee of Congress deliberating upon the deepest and most perplexing topics of a political character, involving even the integrity of the country. Let him sit beneath one of our pulpits, and with the omission of a few party names, he will suppose himself listening to some political leader, whose solicitude for the welfare of the country is so great, that the virtues of the Christian Religion, and man's relations toward God and eternity, are forgotten in the higher importance of promoting the interests of the Nation. If he turn his steps in another direction, he will imagine that religion, driven from the pulpits, has fled to the political rostrum for protection; and he will see the Holy Bible itself erected, or I should say rather, degraded, into a party ensign! These things are going on in the midst of us, and around us. I do not take upon me to say whether these things are right, or wrong; but I do say, that if these things are lawful in the ministers of one denomination, I, as the minister of another, ought to stand acquitted of blame in merely defending the rights of conscience and of education, by means which the laws of God sanction, which the laws of my country authorize and approve. These things, sir, I have written while under the threat of assassination. These things are true. They may assail Bishop Hughes in the public press; they may assail him in the pulpit; they may assail him in the public assembly; they may proscribe, and persecute him, as they please: but neither living, nor dead, I trust, will they be able to fix upon his name the stigma of one act, or of one sentiment, unworthy of what he claims to be—a minister of the Christian and Catholic Church, and a citizen of the United States. In entering upon the discussion of education, I supposed that I should be supported by the countenance of all good men, as the friend of my country. You said that the Catholics, particularly those of Irish birth, were ignorant, and as a consequence of ignorance, disorderly. I wished them to become educated, and as a consequence, orderly. Was this wrong? Do you say they have no *right* to

be educated? The laws have more honorably thought, and more wisely too, decided that they have a right. Do you say, that in being educated they must give up their religious convictions? The laws sanction no such dangerous principle.

A few words more in reference to those who have so long and so unjustly assailed me, and I shall have done. And first of all, I can say with truth, that there is not an unforgiving thought in my mind in reference to any of them. Many of them have been deceived; and, although, in the melancholy events which have occurred, an awful responsibility rests upon those who have been guilty of the deception—still even them I leave to the merciful, but just judgment of the Creator. Of them all I have not deemed it necessary to mention more than two—and toward these I have not an unkind feeling. But this shall not prevent my saying what is necessary to put myself and them right before the public. These two are, as has been more than once stated, James Gordon Bennett and Wm. L. Stone. Of Mr. Stone I have little to say. It is not for me to enter into any analysis of a character so well known as his, and so generally respected. Neither shall I inquire into the motives which could have prompted him, through apparent zeal for his own religion, or hostility to mine, to put himself in the company and in the position in which this letter exhibits him.

Of Mr Bennett I have a far different opinion. Considering his talents; his want of principle; and the power of doing mischief which circumstances have placed within his reach, I regard him as *decidedly* the most *dangerous man*, to the peace and safety of a community, that I have ever known, or ever read of. This opinion is formed on grounds altogether distinct from his peculiar enmity toward myself. But confining the proof of my observation, to what has occurred within my own knowledge and experience, I have but to call the reader's attention to a few facts. When the public press had recovered a little from the the shock produced by his burlesque report, and malignant comment, on the occurrence at Carroll Hall, there was, of course, that reaction which is indicative of candid minds, and just feelings. This operated as a rebuke to the author of the deception, but he would not be foiled. He then represented, that a large portion of the respectable Catholics of New-York were unanimous in their censure of my conduct. He fomented what was termed an indignation meeting, of persons calling themselves Catholics—but who were little

known in their churches, as such—persons who affected to be first rate Irishmen, and almost furious Catholics, once or twice a-year, generally a week or ten days before an election, in the hope of receiving some contemptible little office, which might save them from the necessity of honest but honorable industry. During the discussion of the School question I, without being aware of it, had destroyed their influence; and Bennett, judging correctly of their discontent, thought to use them for the purpose of sowing division in the flock committed to my charge. He was foiled in this too. But nothing daunted, I next discovered him in the sanctuary itself—like the serpent in Paradise—endeavoring to sow discord among my clergy, and to seduce two of them, even by name, into alienation from their duty to God, and toward their Bishop. In this, too, he was foiled, and publicly rebuked from their own pens, for his audacity. I know not what purposes of revenge, mortification like this may have engendered in the mind of such a man as Mr. Bennett; but the public are witnesses of the malignity with which he has not ceased to pursue me up to this hour. If he were even *more* depraved or *less* despised, he would not be so dangerous; but, being without any fixed principle of good, he occupies that ambiguous position which renders him too contemptible for notice, and yet not sufficiently so, to be below the power of mischief. If you notice his slanders, and convict him of them, people will say that you lose your labor; in as much as “nobody believes what Bennett says.” If you do not, your enemies will take them up, as undeniable—asserted in the newspapers—or as Col. Stone adroitly expressed it, “taken from a morning print.” Such is a portion of *my* experience of the danger to the community, from the power of sowing discord and producing evil, no less than that of winging the “poisoned arrow” into the hearts of families, possessed by Mr. Bennett. How he has ever employed these powers, others who have had similar experience, need not be told. Yet dangerous and degraded as he is, I shall meet him for once, if he dares to give his name in contradicting *any one* of the *above propositions*, which I have laid down as so many facts. And if he do not dare to meet me, then I consign him to a lower depth of infamy than he has yet reached. There is one other matter, however, which I cannot pass over in silence; and it is that, during the political excitement, carried to a high and dangerous pitch, among those who have made you, sir, Mayor of New-York, no man was so active in fanning the embers of social and civil discord into a conflagration of

fury, as Mr. Bennett. I am not a politician : but I profess to know something of the laws, as well as the weakness and depravity of human nature, and one of its *moral* laws is, that whenever there is a combination for the purpose of denouncing any particular class of men, the effect will be to drive the assailed into combination also. This was the effect which I dreaded among the Catholic people of New-York, whether of native or foreign origin. And while I was laboring, as I have already described, to defeat this result, Mr. Bennett was flinging among them as a fire-brand, the denunciations that were uttered in the meetings of the Native Americans. Not only were these denunciations against myself, but against the Catholic Churches of the city. I remember the proceedings of one meeting in particular, as reported in the Herald ; I recollect distinctly the speech of one orator, who with violent gestures proclaimed, "*that there were dungeons under St. Patrick's Cathedral, and that these could be intended for no other purpose than the imprisonment and torture of the Protestant ministers of the city, when the Catholics gained the ascendancy.*" I quote the substance, if not the very language of the report. Since your election, I have been told that the whole of this meeting, and this atrocious language, was a fabrication of Bennett's own ! But how were the Catholics of the city to know this ?

You, sir, who must know something of human nature, need not be informed, that in all of social outbreaks, particularly of a riotous character, the moral incendiary first fires the passions, and then the victims of those inflamed passions are prepared to apply the torch or wield the murderous instrument against the objects of their fury. Read again, if you please the passage above quoted, proceeding from a meeting of Native Americans, published in twenty or thirty thousand copies of the Herald, forth on the population of the city, at a time of extraordinary excitement and deplorable bitterness of feeling—be pleased to read it again, I and, weighing these circumstances, make up your mind as to the effect which it was calculated, if not intended, to produce. It was calculated to destroy social confidence—produce feelings of rage on one side, and revenge on the other ; and among the least enlightened portion of the community of all sides, to produce that swelling up of bad passions which an additional drop might have caused to overflow, breaking down the barrier, and leaving our fair city a scene of desolation, such as the world has never seen before. If the American Republic

language, are they not utterly inexcusable? But if they did not hold it, and if it was a fabrication of Bennett's own in their name, then, sir, have I not said well, that he is the most dangerous man to the peace of the community that I have ever known, or even read of? If, during the crisis through which we have passed, one spark had been produced from the embers of strife which this man was fanning—if, owing to the insults on one side and the instinct of mingled self-preservation and revenge on the other—a collision had taken place, and all who had been inflamed on either side, feeling called upon, should rush to the support of their friends, I shudder at the contemplation of what might have been the consequences.

Alas! alas! sir, that men cannot be content to worship God according to the dictates of their conscience, without preventing their fellow-mortals from enjoying the same privilege. On the school question, nothing more than the recognized legal rights of conscience has been claimed for the Catholic children. These rights, the Catholics, even under the most intolerant governments have never given up, and never will relinquish. They have been deprived of them by intolerant laws. If the American people are willing to enact such laws, we shall submit to pains and penalties. We interfere with no other denomination of citizens—we wish them to enjoy the same privileges that we claim for ourselves. Is not this the principle of the American Government? Is it not the pride, and the boast, and the glory of the American people? And if it be all this, why is it that Americans are opposed to it?

I, sir, am not a man of strife and contention. My disposition is, I trust, both pacific and benevolent. As a proof of this, I may mention that I never had a personal altercation with a human being in my life—we never had occasion to call others—or be called myself before any tribunal of the earth. It is true, that public duty has not unfrequently forced upon me the necessity of taking my stand in moral opposition to principles which I deemed injurious and unjust. But even then, at least, I have made the distinction which Christian feeling suggests, between the cause and the person of the advocate arrayed against me. And though I have sometimes perhaps been severe on my opponents, I trust, it proceeded not from any malice in the heart—it came on me rather as a species of intellectual indignation at witnessing bad logic employed and worse bigotry.

In this communication, I may have done some injustice to the